TRANSCRIPT— LEE JAMES PANTAS

Interviewee: Lee James Pantas

Interviewers: Tealey Ellis & Judith Robertson

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Abstract: Lee Pantas discusses his experience moving to Fairview from Connecticut, and the changes to Fairview over his thirty years living in the area.

TE: My name is Tealey Ellis and I am a volunteer with the Fairview Library Oral History Project. Today is December 12th, 2019, and I am talking with Lee Pantas at his home in Fairview. Thank you, Mr. Pantas, for talking with us today.

JR: This is Judith Robertson recording the oral history of Lee Pantas at his home at 18 Garren Mountain Lane in Fairview, North Carolina, on December 12th, 2019, for the Fairview Oral History Project for the North Carolina Room at Pack Library and the Buncombe County Library System. The conditions of use form for sound and video recordings has been signed by the interviewee.

TE: Okay. Again, thank you, Mr. Pantas, for talking with us today and agreeing to share your experiences in Fairview. And I noticed from your interview life history form that you were born in Stamford, Connecticut. And so maybe we can begin with you telling us when you came to Fairview area and what brought you here.

LP: Okay. Yeah. At the time before we moved here, we lived in Greenwich, Connecticut, which is a place that I grew up in. I had gone back there with my wife, Elizabeth, who was alive at that point, of course. We lived in Greenwich and wanted to move out of that area somewhere else for a number of reasons. A, very expensive place to live. B, we wanted to live out in the country. And I had thought about going to Vermont. My wife had come down here to Lake Junaluska in the summer for a summer camp. She remembered the mountains, so we came down here. Done. That was it. Saw it once, said, "We're moving."

TE: And what year was that?

LP: That was 1989. We moved here in 1990. Yep.

TE: And what were your thoughts? Besides you knew that you liked it?

LP: Beautiful place. Yeah. We found some land out in the country and bought 25 acres, and now down to 7. But bought the land and built a home, and we loved living here. We just like the living out in the country, but close enough to Asheville where you had resources and stuff that you would want to have.

TE: And is the land and home that you're talking about where we are today?

LP: Yes, it is.

TE: Okay. So, this was your original found-it, love-it spot.

LP: Right. Right. We bought the land and proceeded to go ahead and build a log home.

TE: Okay. Living in Fairview today and seeing some changes that have taken place, could you describe, to the best of your ability, what Fairview looked like in terms of roads or businesses, et cetera, as compared to today?

LP: Yeah, big changes, of course, as you would expect in 30 years, primarily driven by the growth of Asheville. Asheville has been revitalized, as we know. It's now a major tourist destination. I can attest to that fact with the sale of my guidebook because people are coming here all the time to visit, but also to relocate. And so, it's always been a big drive for people to come to Asheville. They're not all going to want to live in Asheville. A lot of them going to want to live in the surrounding area like we did. And so that puts a lot of pressure on an area in terms of growth and facilities that it offers and all that.

So, when we first came here, there was just a little windy, two-lane road up from the Reynolds area up into Fairview. It took about 15 minutes to navigate your way up that road, praying all the time because it was a windy country road and people would tend to drift from around the curves. So, when we got out here, the land that we found was just wide-open pasture that had been maintained by a man, John Laughter, who is now deceased. We bought the land from him. And when we built the log home out in the Garren Creek Valley where we lived, it was a lot of big local news because a big house was going up. Well, the house is large in size, but it's not especially a castle-type of house. It's a log home.

TE: It fits in with the environment.

LP: It fits in with the environment. But it was also news because it was somebody new moved in here, bought some land and are building a big house. Today, I mean 2019, I

mean there's McMansions going up like mushrooms in the spring everywhere in Fairview. We're talking about mega homes. The kind of place that we wanted to get away from in Connecticut has arrived in Fairview, because in Greenwich where I lived and where I grew up, that was the name of the game was, the bigger the house, the better. So, down here I see that change and you're not going to stop it because Asheville is a magnet. People come here from other parts of the country with lots of money to spend and they buy land and they'll build big houses. And that's fine. In some ways it's bad, but in most ways it's good because we saw real changes in Fairview with a better school, improvment in the fire department and services and so forth. The main thing, and now, you've got traffic on the roads at night whereas back then, hey, every five minutes you'd see a car.

TE: You'd see a car. So, what was Garren Creek Road like when you-

LP: Same as it is today. Same windy, twisty, poorly designed country road.

TE: It was paved.

LP: It was paved and it just follows the contours of the land. But no improvements other than they repaved it. And they're thinking of putting up guardrails now.

TE: When you built and was able to move into this house, where were your nearest neighbors at that time?

LP: Nearest neighbor was the house right on the road that was the Laughter home. That's where John and Agnes Laughter lived. And she's still alive. She's 90. She still quips. She's got all her marbles and they're still there. And well, I'm surrounded by a couple of

brand new big homes. People that I sold the land to built nice homes. And so now there's more, and there are homes showing up all the time.

TE: In addition to Mrs. Laughter, how many people around you, to your knowledge, are native to this area, if you know?

LP: Agnes Laughter.

TE: That's it?

LP: Grew up 20 miles from here.

TE: Everybody else is new, more or less?

LP: Everybody else around here now is brand new.

TE: Okay.

LP: Yeah. Yeah. So, Agnes is the matriarch and she is an absolute necessity for you to interview, I would think, locally, within a mile or so, have been here the longest.

TE: In addition to better school, improvements in a fire department in Fairview, is there anything else that you would say is a great improvement?

LP: Oh, it's just really nice people moving to the area. There's this cultural clash because people that have lived here for a long time, to a certain degree, resent it. But the people that come here may have a different view of what they think is right. So, you're always going to have that cultural clash. Not necessarily bad, it's just normal. And I think that it's

a good influx of the people that are moving to this area generally want to get away from the big cities. They want to get away from the Los Angeleses and the Baltimores of the world. And so, they bring an attitude, which is very sympathetic and fits in well with living in the country in Asheville, where people tend to be really nice. One of the things that I noted when we moved here is, there really is something to southern hospitality. It's not just an empty cliche.

TE: I agree.

LP: People are mellower in the South. They tend to be friendlier. In New York, God forbid, you get too close to somebody, they'll honk the horn and yell at you. Down here, people say hi and wave. And so, I think the new people that come here, they adjust real quickly.

TE: When you and your wife moved here, did you feel, in talking about that same kind of cultural thing, a sense of community in itself?

LP: Yeah, I did. I felt really welcomed by the people, especially the Laughters and the other neighbors who are no longer living. They were very friendly. Matter of fact, John would come over and help me when I was building a log home, do stuff. He was a carpenter. I mean, he knew his stuff. Yeah. They were really, really supportive and very friendly. Occasionally I'd run into somebody... Because I'm a Yankee, I'd come from Connecticut... that is still fighting the Civil War and that person and I would lock horns and discuss why it's stupid to talk about the Civil War anymore. But that was a rare occurrence. Most of the time people were really friendly and welcoming.

TE: Right. Well, and given that though, I think, and when talking about a specific culture here, I think we need to keep in mind also that people that have grown up around each other in this area can have disagreements as well about civil wars-

LP: Of course, that's just human nature. It's not just the North and South. But I did have instances where people would see me and they'd say, "Oh, you're from Connecticut. What are you doing down here, Yankee?" Then I'd tell them... I won't get into that... what I was doing. But that was rare.

TE: When you moved here, let's say, in this valley area where you have lived now for so long, was there a lot of farming going on?

LP: Not a lot. There still is. I know John, the man that I bought the land from, he had cattle, but small-scale farming only because of the terrain. People would have goats and occasionally you see cows. And there still are cows in Fairview over near the main highway. You can see them off of Hollywood Road. But there was not a lot of farming. It was just little smaller homes clustered here and there throughout the valley. Yeah.

TE: In terms of farming, do you see any generational family members maintaining a farm that might have belonged to a grandfather?

LP: Oh, I don't know any personally. Okay. I do have friends... The son, for instance, the young guy, he's in his forties now. He is a son of a doctor, Dr. Michael Greer, who is now dead. But Michael ran a very successful medical practice and really well known in the Fairview area. His son became a farmer. He's raising radishes and vegetables and that's what he does. So, he's a new generation farmer.

TE: A new generation.

JR: But he also has a degree in agriculture from Warren Wilson College.

LP: He probably does.

JR: He does.

TE: Oh, he knows.

JR: I know Mike. Yeah.

LP: But he's a farmer and he became that. But I don't know about the continuation of family farms, because there's not a lot of them around here.

TE: True.

LP: I spent the summers on my grandparents' dairy farms in upper New York state. Those were huge farms, thousands of acres, hundreds of cows. Those got passed down from generation to generation. But I don't see that kind of farming here. Just really small-scale farming. And a lot of it now is, of course, specialty. Yeah. Beer-making hops and stuff like that.

TE: Yes.

JR: Would you say, perhaps, a lot of those farms were subsistence farming where the families lived in clusters and they had subsistence farms?

LP: From my limited perspective-

JR: Not commercial.

LP: No, not at all.

JR: Because as you say, the terrain is impossible.

LP: It's just not suitable. Now, that farm that's over there on Hollywood as you go towards 74, it looks like they've got something going because you see a lot. And then you've got the Taylor Ranch with their longhorns.

TE: Yes.

JR: Well, you've got those pieces of property. It's different.

LP: They've got property that can be conducive to it. Here, no. And Mr. Laughter, who ran cattle on this property that I'm now living on and the land that I sold to my neighbors, he actually had cattle, but that was a secondary source of income. And he didn't milk them, he raised beef cattle and sold them, whatever.

JR: Yeah. There are a lot of people who have a few cows.

LP: I have goats.

JR: Just like people we've interviewed. They just have a few cows.

LP: Sure. On either side of me, you have couple with cows there. Neighbors two houses over have goats. So, it's small scale.

TE: It is. And I have a neighbor whose cows like to come and visit me when they can find a space in the fence.

LP: And see, that goes back to the nature of this area where you don't see a lot of commercialization because there's not the broad open land or the access that's easy. Trucks have to go up the mountains. It's harder to get here and more expensive. And the same with farming. There just isn't the land for it.

TE: True.

LP: What's the big deal? Tourism.

TE: Yeah, it is.

LP: And people that want to retire here and live near a nice city and enjoy life in the country.

TE: When you and your wife moved here, I'm assuming that was your first foray into living out in the country?

LP: No, I spent summers on a farm.

TE: On a farm. But as far as living-

LP: But as far as actually living, this was our first foray.

TE: Did you feel safe?

LP: Yeah. Not worried about anybody. I mean, I never have been. I mean, it's not an issue in my life to think about worrying about that. I had a very comfortable feeling moving here that people were so friendly, which as I said, that southern hospitality, but especially the local neighbors, they were wonderful.

TE: So, I can take that statement and apply it, that you feel safe now?

LP: Yeah.

TE: Still feel safe?

LP: Yeah. I mean, somebody would be stupid to try to break into my house, they'd be dead. But I don't look at people that way. I don't even think about that. I honestly don't think about that, "Gee, what am I worried about? Somebody?" Because you could be living in Los Angeles, then you better be worried.

TE: This is true. This is true.

LP: Or Baltimore or the suburbs of any big city, then you've got something to worry about. Out here, people are really nice. For the most part, they're honest. But I don't even think about it, to be honest with you. Although I would add that I have a top-of-the-line security system. I have video cameras and if they break in, game over for somebody.

TE: And their face is out there too. Yeah.

LP: What's that?

TE: And the face would be out there too from your video-

LP: Of course.

TE: ... and stuff.

LP: Yeah, no, I just put that on the record. And I'm no different than anybody else that would be living with a home in the country. You'd have some kind of security system. But my perspective, and it's always been that way, is that this is a really safe area to live in. And it's just a feeling I have about it. That's why we chose this area.

TE: And I'm glad you still have that, that it's not changed yet.

LP: Oh yeah. No, it hadn't changed at all. If anything, it's gotten more and more-

TE: Gotten stronger.

LP: ... stronger. Yeah.

TE: In your earlier days of living here and meeting new people and some people who were born and raised here, were you ever told of an individual or so that might be considered what we sometimes refer to as characters, who had a lot of stories to tell, some of them true or not true?

LP: Yeah. There's people like that all the time. I mean, you run into them every day.

TE: Any particular stories or legends you might have heard?

LP: Nothing that stands out that somebody told me that I think is worth repeating. I really can't recall anything. I mean, I've met some interesting people, which we all do. But

everybody's interesting to me. It's not just the character. Those people, typically, if they stand out that way, if they're not sort of already famous... I don't know. Most people... How do I put this? The answer is no. I don't think of anybody that stands out.

TE: I get it. Thank you. In those early days of living here-

LP: Well, let me interrupt you and go back.

TE: Okay, sure. Go ahead.

LP: In one exception... And I'm not fighting the Civil War again, but there was an encounter I had with a character once in Office Depot. When we first moved here, it was a store on Tunnel Road. And this is a true accounting of my encounter with this particular character. Standing in line, the woman at the sales counter was from New England. Her name was Roxanne. Roxanne was a very competent salesperson. She handled the copy shop and all that. Line of about five ladies and myself and one guy behind me, guy about my age. At that point, he was in his fifties and I was in my fifties. And we're standing there in line and Roxanne's talking and she sees me, she waves. "Hi. Lee." And she knew I was from New England. So, we chatted briefly on the side about New England.

And then this guy behind me says, "What are you Yankees doing down here in the first place?" And I'm not trying to knock anybody, but this was a true encounter. And, "What are you doing here? Why don't you go back to New England?" I mean, he was really abrasive and rude. And I'm looking at him and I answered him, "I'll tell you why we're here. We won the war, we own it." And everybody laughed, which is a dumb thing to say because we don't own it. But that was my retort there. So that encounter is cemented in

my brain because he was so over-the-top crazy. So, I gave him an over-the-top crazy answer.

TE: I understand.

LP: But that's the only encounter I've had in 30 years of somebody like that down here. Most people are so gracious and so kind and don't care where you're from. This particular person had a problem. And a lot of times people that create disturbances like that are coming from some wounded agenda or some problem.

TE: Sure, sure.

LP: And you can keep that in the story or delete it. I don't care.

TE: No, I think it's fine.

LP: But I'm just telling you that was my true encounter and that was the only really locking of horns that I've had coming here from New England, as a Yankee, in the South.

TE: Okay. What was the political background like when you moved here?

LP: I don't recall because I didn't pay as much attention to politics now as I do. And that's probably because I like to think I've gotten a little wiser and I'm a little more politically astute. But I didn't pay much attention to it, to be honest with you. I always tended to be thinking in terms of Democratic candidates, but I sometimes voted for... I loved Ronald Reagan. So, it is a mix. I don't recall much about the politics at the time, to be honest with you.

TE: What about the racial background?

LP: Same thing. I know I'm coming to the south and this area historically has had problems, but there's a tremendous sea change that's happened in the world and in America particularly. I've not encountered any racism at all in the people down here. I think that's partly due to the fact that this is a much more cosmopolitan area. The Asheville/Fairview area, people tend to be coming from different parts of the world. They've seen more. And even the people live here, they're meeting new people. And I've just never seen that as an element that has caused any problems. I coach track at Reynolds High School. Done that for 20 years. I coach a lot of kids and over half of them are African American and they don't see it as an issue. Occasionally, you'll hear something, but I've not encountered that at all in Fairview, to be honest with you. 30 years, it's what you'd expect. I mean, people are nice. When they're nice, they tend to be more accepting.

TE: Coming from New England to here, did you encounter or have you encountered any new kinds of celebrations?

LP: Yes, I did. I married a Southern girl, so I got into that right away. The grits and the collard greens, whatever, which I really don't like. I've had to learn to eat with a smile.

JR: Still you don't like.

LP: I don't like them. They're good for me, but I don't like them. But that's about the only one.

TE: Oh, my goodness. Oh, that is so funny.

LP: And that's a real southern dish. Or maybe not, I don't know. But I got the impression that it was Southern.

TE: Yeah. Grits, I don't like. Collards, I do. So, I can empathize in some way with you, I guess.

LP: And also, not to knock Krispy Kreme, but from New England, I love Dunkin' Donuts. And there was Krispy Kreme down here and my wife loved Krispy Kreme. And I said, "I can't stand those donuts. I like Dunkin' Donuts." So, I was happy when the Dunkin, Donuts arrived.

TE: North and south meet.

LP: Yeah. That's a real cultural divide. Right.

TE: Oh, that is funny.

JR: That is funny.

TE: When you moved to Fairview area, were there any stores or businesses that were present then that are not now?

LP: Yeah, one in particular is Mountain Variety.

JR: Oh yeah.

LP: Wonderful little store run by the Seller family; I believe. Really nice folks. They run a great store. They've always been very friendly and I like to stop and buy stuff there

when I can. That store's been around and thankfully so. We have now recently the advent of new stores, including the disease called Dollar General. With those ugly stores popping up everywhere, nutty thing. But that's just my own personal opinion. So, you tell them not to sue me, but I hate them. I think they're ugly. One store will be fine, but five within a five-mile radius is insane. So that kind of thing is happening now. All there was was Mountain Variety. Angelo's Restaurant has stayed forever. Great local restaurant. Wonderful. They've been here since the beginning. Those two places are the only two right now I'm thinking of that have been... And of course, a couple of gas stations have gone through different changes. But Angelo's and Mountain Variety were the two that were around.

TE: When 74 was changed to four-lane, were there any businesses or spots that changed drastically that buildings had to go?

LP: Down near Reynolds, you see a lot. And you still see that today. At the base of 74... Actually, before you get into Fairview, that exploded with changes and new buildings. Understandably so. The concern that we had, that at least I had, and my wife did too, during about 15 years or so ago, was when... 20 years... when the road opened up, that it would eventually become a long strip of ugly buildings like you see on Leicester Highway. Not knocking Leicester. I have a lot of friends that live there, but that is a mistake the way they've done that. And I mean, you can't regulate it. To a certain degree, it's normal growth. But that hasn't happened in Fairview. And part of that is because Mine Hole Gap, you can't build along that road. And when you get up into Fairview, then it becomes much more residential and land is probably a little less buildable. So whatever reason, it's just down near Reynolds.

JR: Well, wasn't there a point at which there was some people in the community tried to organize to design the community a little bit better?

LP: Oh yeah. There was a lot of people, particularly Annie Ager comes to mind and people like that, that are really well known locally.

JR: Looking ahead.

LP: Forward looking and realizing we don't want it to go like Leicester.

JR: Exactly.

LP: We want it to stay. And they have. They were successful. They also got that four-lane road designated at Scenic Highway or whatever, and they outlawed the damn billboards. Only one that was grandfathered in. So, they did a lot of things that makes it such a beautiful drive out from Asheville, even though the traffic-

JR: But there's still no zoning.

LP: Right. Yeah. You can do what you want out here basically. And that's not good. But on the other hand, people have-

JR: It's the country.

LP: ... a certain amount of common sense. You can't over-regulate people but no zoning. Yeah, it's wide open. And a good example is my present situation. I'm now living alone. My wife died from cancer a couple of years ago after a long battle with that. I'm now living in this big house. I'm a professional artist and an author, very successful at what I

do. But I still want to do more with my life. I'm now living on seven acres that are beautifully manicured with a big house. I'm turning my house and property into a day retreat center for people to come here and it'll all be announced and opened in April. I'm going to have a big opening for people to rent the property and grounds for the day, come have their meetings.

JR: Wonderful.

LP: I think it'll work out. But case in point, nothing can restrict me from doing that here. I could have a chicken farm down there. And I'm not knocking chicken farms. Well, I am because most chicken farms are chicken hells. But I could do whatever I want with the land. I actually had somebody come out here and suggest, rather than do a retreat center... This lady, God bless her, said, "Why don't you open up a shooting range?" And I'm saying, "What? A shooting range?" And I had no answer to her. I just moved on to the next subject. My neighbors would have no way to stop me if I wanted to start a shooting range. That's the problem with no zoning, but hey, this is America. That's my thoughts on it. Yeah.

TE: I've lived in Fairview five years and absolutely love it. Found what I was looking for. And even though the zoning laws don't exist, I'm just amazed, in kind of following up on what you and Judith just said, that it's not crazier than it is.

LP: Well, you're right. Part of that now is driven by the cost of land. It's much more expensive to buy land here than it was, obviously, in years past. That factor means that somebody is less likely to sell land for a mobile home development. Not knocking that because I have friends that live in mobile homes, but they're more than likely to sell it to

a developer who's going to parcel it up and divide it into a couple of really nicer homes. Or bigger homes, let's put it that way. So that's a driver in what's happening now. The other thing goes back to my original point. The kind of person that likes to live in Fairview or has moved here, generally speaking, wants to preserve the community and keep it nice. They think of their neighbors before they make a decision. A lot of people do. I like to think I'm along those lines. So, yeah.

TE: I believe you are.

LP: Yeah, I try.

TE: I think you've succeeded. Go ahead.

JR: I have a question that kind of plays into that. When you moved here, did you have children?

LP: Yes.

JR: Did you raise your children here in Fairview?

LP: Yes. Yeah, my daughter was 10 years old, my son was seven.

JR: And what were their names?

LP: Daniel and Susanna. They still live in the area. And my daughter is a successful professional artist like me. And also, is a counselor, like her mother.

JR: What is her name?

LP: Susanna.

JR: Susanna. And does she use the name Pantas?

LP: Pantas is her last name. And my son, Daniel Pantas, lives in the area. He is a professional prospector. He hunts for western North Carolina gems, of which there are many in the mountains. Rubies and sapphires, is how he earns his living.

JR: Interesting.

LP: But yeah, they moved here with us. The only way I got my daughter to move here... Because she was 10, she was riding horses in Connecticut. It was very… And I used the word very emphatically, expensive to ride horses in Greenwich, Connecticut.

TE: I bet.

LP: You paid $200 a lesson even back 30 years ago.

JR: Oh, my. Can't imagine.

LP: When we moved down here, she says, "Daddy, I don't want move. I'm not going to move. All my friends are here. I got my horses. I can go riding." I said, "Susanna, you can have your own horse." That did it. She says, "How can I help you move, Daddy?" So, we got down here, the first thing I did after I built the house was build a ring for her and she got a horse and put it in a pasture.

TE: Wise man.

LP: So, it worked.

JR: Very good.

LP: So yes, we had two kids.

JR: That's terrific. Now, they did go to the local schools?

LP: They went to Fairview School. Now that school was in the old gymnasium, which is still existing. Thank you, Annie Ager, who fought to keep that thing going. They use it as a sort of a community center. It's funky. It needs a lot of work, but it's serviceable. That was a school. And then they built the new Fairview School through the money of the people that are coming here and building and whatever. That was one of the improvements. So, they went through Fairview and Reynolds.

JR: And they went to Fairview Middle. Did they have middle school?

LP: They went to Reynolds Middle School.

JR: Reynolds Middle.

LP: Fairview Elementary, Reynolds Middle, and then Reynolds High School.

JR: And then Reynolds High. Right. Oh, that's great. Did they ride the bus?

LP: Yep. No problems. Good. Worked.

JR: Bus came out here? Yeah, that's wonderful.

LP: Yeah, even back then.

JR: But that was even before the library was built.

LP: Yeah. The library came along in-

JR: It's 20 years old this year.

LP: The new library. Right. That was another nice improvement. That and the Food Lion Plaza there. And that all came--

JR: The nice post office.

LP: And that was all direct result of the four-lane road because if you didn't have the four-lane road, it took a journey to get out here. It was really a windy, twisty, crazy road.

JR: It was scary.

LP: Yeah. So now all of a sudden opens up and everybody said this is a good place for that kind of businesses.

JR: Yeah. So, you really have seen that kind of change.

LP: Yeah. Total metamorphosis.

JR: You've been involved in it, too.

LP: Yeah. And I don't complain about people, "Hey, the more the merrier." I mean, there's going to be certain constraints and because there's only so much buildable land, but that's life.

TE: That is true. The next question I'm going to ask you, in some ways you've referred to and talked about throughout the interview, but as maybe a closing statement, how would you describe your maybe best experiences living in Fairview? And I think obviously moving here turned out to be what you and your wife wanted. How could you describe that for us in terms of what it's meant to you?

LP: I could answer that question a lot of ways, obviously. I think, probably, I've always loved living in the country. I think I got exposed to that when I was, very early, going to my grandparents' dairy farms for the summer. So, we both wanted to live in the country. And living on the country has its distinct benefits if you're a human being, I believe. I'm not knocking anybody that lives in a city. There's a place for that. And people love that as well. But personally, I just like being around nature and animals and the scenic beauty that you get. And I mean, yeah, we landed in the right place that way.

TE: Good. That's always so good to hear.

LP: And the mountains, in particular, not the middle of Kansas. We're talking about beautiful mountains with rushing streams and meadows and change of the seasons.

TE: Did you ever do any hiking in your younger years.

LP: Oh yeah. Sure. I still do. Not a lot, but I still do. Yeah. Yeah. Love to hike and stuff like that.

TE: Is there any question that either of us have not asked you that would've touched upon something that you want to share in this interview that we haven't touched on?

LP: Yes. Yeah. One episode, in particular. 25 years ago, I stood in the meadow in front of the house. And to my absolute astonishment, I'll never forget it, there were thousands and thousands of monarch butterflies coming from the Black Mountain area heading west on their fall migration. Somehow they had gathered together and they were going as a group, which lasted about an hour as they fluttered by, just hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of them. And I just stood there watching with my mouth open and got really interested in monarch butterflies because of that, of course. And they headed to Mexico where they over-wintered now.

I've never seen that phenomenon since then. And matter of fact, the monarch butterflies have almost disappeared from the mountains, at least this area. Occasionally you'll see one in the summer, but not like the number there used to be. And of course, that's a direct outgrowth of habitat loss in Mexico and in America. And the very subtle, gradual climate changes that are happening that make it harder for these animals to adapt. But mainly habitat loss. So that was a kind of unique Fairview experience that I had and that was something I'll never forget.

TE: And you said that was approximately when?

LP: That was probably 1994, something like that. Yeah. Approximately 25 years ago.

TE: What a blessing to see that.

LP: Yeah, it was really special. I mean, yeah, we all have wildlife encounters. That was a big one for me to see that. And it's sad because the butterfly population, that one is really, really endangered. It may not bounce back. They may go extinct, we don't know. But they were sure around 25 years ago. Not anymore.

TE: Did you have a question that...

JR: Yeah, I would just like to ask. You did offer to donate a couple of books to the collection.

LP: Yes.

JR: And I wonder if we could get on tape your description of these books?

LP: Sure. The first book is called *The Ultimate Guide to Asheville and Western North Carolina.* When we first move here - I'm a professional artist. I do pen and ink illustrations, among other things - and I had been doing an awful lot of pen and ink drawings of historic buildings in the area. The Wolfe Memorial, Biltmore Estate, places like that. And I was approached at an art show by a guy who was a local publisher. He said, "How about doing a book?" I said, "Yeah." There was no guidebook to the mountains. So, I wrote the first guide book called *The Ultimate Guide to Asheville* and included my illustrations, and it’s still going. Twenty years later, it's still out there, sold 30,000 copies, a lot of books. It is considered the number one resource for tourists that want to come to this area. I'm not trying to sell books. That's just a fact.

JR: Oh, I think it's fascinating.

LP: And yeah, it works. The book works. A labor of love. A lot of research went into it. And I'd like to donate that book. That book will be interesting as a time capsule because you can look back and say in this particular year, these restaurants were around.

JR: Sure. And stores.

LP: And whatever. And attractions, in particular.

JR: And that we all remember those stores that aren't here anymore.

LP: Right. And there are those that aren't. And the other book is relatively new. It's called Wild and Furry Animals of the Southern Appalachian Mountains. And it features my illustrations of all of the species of animals from West Virginia to Alabama. And that's a book which also is a time capsule, because there are species in there, whoever's listening to this 50 years from now, some of those animals aren't here. And that's due to climate change. Man driven climate change, fossil fuel driven. And that's my particular take on it as a scientist. So those are the two books.

JR: Well, thank you.

LP: And I'm glad to donate them.

TE: We appreciate it.

JR: And I think that hearing your reason for giving them is excellent. Adds quite a bit to-

LP: I think, yeah, as time capsules, they'll really be interesting a hundred years from now. "Okay, this was here. Is it still here?" We don't know.

TE: I have one other question. We were talking about your son and daughter earlier. Do you have grandchildren?

LP: Nope. No kids. Not yet.

TE: Okay.

LP: They're working on it, I hope.

TE: Okay. The reason I asked that question now, at the end of the interview, is because in hearing some of the, not only historical but scientific, your many areas of interest that what a great pleasure it will be for those future grandchildren to be able to let their children hear your voice.

LP: Yeah. Yeah. That would be interesting.

TE: And what you had to say.

LP: Yeah.

TE: Thank you very much for this time.

LP: You're welcome.

JR: Thank you, sir.

END OF INTERVIEW.